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SUBJECT: DARFUR: FRANCE SEEKING BROADER ENGAGEMENT

REF: A. STEINFELD-KANEDA E-MAILS

- [1](#)B. STATE 65750
- [1](#)C. PARIS 2005

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Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: MFA AF DAS-equivalent Helene Le Gal on May 25 said that Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner was likely to phone Secretary Rice later on May 25 to discuss Darfur. Kouchner may raise with the Secretary the possibility of France hosting a minister-level meeting of Darfur Contact Group members in Paris on June 25, when Secretary Rice is tentatively scheduled to be in Paris. The GOF hopes to have its Darfur policy review completed by June 25 and to share its thinking with Contact Group ministers at such a meeting. President Sarkozy is likely to raise Darfur at the upcoming G-8 meeting, including during any bilateral meeting he may hold with President Bush. Le Gal said that France wanted to strengthen cooperation with the U.S. on Darfur and that these high-level contacts were part of that effort. Le Gal described French efforts to seek a more active role in Darfur, in both the EU and national contexts, with respect to humanitarian, security, and political issues. New forms of French engagement could include increased contributions to humanitarian efforts, use of French military forces in Chad to support humanitarian workers, and possible French military participation in an eventual hybrid AU-UN Darfur PKO. The French are also considering mounting an operation in Chad, perhaps with EU participation, if a UN PKO for Chad does not materialize soon. Le Gal said that the recent UN report on Darfur appeared to have resolved questions about command and control over the hybrid AU-UN force. She reported that UN envoy Jan Eliasson would meet with faction leader Abdulwahid in Paris on May 27, in order to try to convince him to re-engage in the political dialogue process. Le Gal said that Abdulwahid remained very critical of the process and was making unrealistic "maximalist" demands. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) MFA DAS-equivalent for East and Central Africa Helene Le Gal on May 25 provided an update on French thinking on Darfur, a subject of strong interest since Bernard Kouchner became Foreign Minister last week. Le Gal said that all concerned GOF elements had been meeting and drafting options papers non-stop in order to respond to Kouchner's call for increased French activism in Darfur.

KOUCHNER TO PHONE SECRETARY RICE,
WANTS TO INCREASE COOPERATION WITH U.S.

13. (C) Le Gal said that Kouchner was planning to phone Secretary Rice later on May 25 to discuss Darfur. Le Gal

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said that Kouchner would likely raise the possibility of France's hosting a ministerial-level meeting of Darfur Contact Group members during the Secretary's planned June 25 visit to Paris. She said that Kouchner wanted to use the Secretary's visit as an opportunity to energize the

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international community's efforts in Darfur. The meeting need not be a long one -- "perhaps one hour," Le Gal said. The French hope to finalize their policy review (see below) by June 25 and would present their ideas at the ministerial meeting.

14. (C) Le Gal said that President Sarkozy was planning to raise Darfur during the upcoming June 6-8 G-8 meeting, given its focus on Africa. Le Gal said that Sarkozy would likely also discuss Darfur in any bilateral meeting with President Bush on the margins of the G-8 meeting.

15. (C) Regarding possible contact between Special Envoy Natsios and Kouchner (ref A), Le Gal said that the GOF was thinking of creating its own Sudan/Darfur Special Envoy, and that this person, once named, would be SE Natsios's natural counterpart. However, she said that Kouchner would likely be amenable should SE Natsios seek to contact him directly. She suggested that it might be better to make such an approach after the G-8 meeting, when French planning would probably be closer to final form.

16. (C) Le Gal said that these high-level contacts were part of a GOF effort to increase cooperation with the U.S. on Darfur, the need for which Kouchner had expressed on several occasions since taking office. She referred also to the phone conversation between MFA AF A/S-equivalent de Gliniasty and his counterpart A/S Frazer on May 23.

POLICY REVIEW

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17. (C) Le Gal described the policy review as taking place on several fronts simultaneously. The French have been working with the EU to develop an options paper on Darfur humanitarian and security issues that the GOF hopes will be a main subject of discussion at the June GAERC meeting.

18. (C) On the national level, Le Gal said that the GOF was developing a broader set of options papers that she hoped would be distilled into a concrete action plan for review by senior leaders, including President Sarkozy. In addition to humanitarian and security issues, the action plan would include political subjects. The latter would include ways to push for resumption of political negotiations, with France approaching both the government and rebel sides to encourage their participation. This would include rebel groups in Chad, Le Gal noted.

19. (C) On the humanitarian side, Le Gal said the GOF would consider ways to increase support to UN entities and NGOs operating in Darfur. This might include increased provision of material goods. The French were also considering using their military assets in Chad -- French troops and the base at Abeche -- to support humanitarian relief efforts. She mentioned the possible use of French military aircraft to transport humanitarian relief supplies.

110. (C) Concerning security questions, Le Gal said that the GOF was considering increased support for AMIS, which might include direct funding. The French would also "put pressure on Khartoum and on DPKO" to accelerate progress on the Heavy Support Package. Notably, Le Gal said that the French were considering contributing troops to an eventual hybrid AU-UN

PKO.

¶11. (C) Le Gal stressed that the foregoing were at present elements in the options package that the MFA and a range of GOF agencies were studying. The package would have to be refined, and "I can guarantee you it will be closely scrutinized by the political leadership, at the highest levels, before any of it becomes a reality," she observed. She added that Kouchner was putting considerable weight into this project and she predicted that he would be among those favoring strong French action in Darfur. The policy review was moving along very quickly, with interagency meetings taking place daily, the goal being to present a finished package to France's leadership by early-mid June.

CHAD

¶12. (C) In addition to including Chad in any thinking on Darfur, Le Gal said that the French were thinking of specific ways to support Chad itself. This included pressure "wherever necessary" to make progress on establishing an international PKO for Chad. She said that the French were considering ways for France, with possible EU participation, to put a mission of some sort (not further specified) into Chad. should it appear that it would take too long for the UN to deploy a its own mission to Chad.

COMMAND AND CONTROL OF HYBRID PKO

¶13. (C) We asked Le Gal whether the French continued to have their own concerns about how the issue of command and control of the hybrid AU-UN PKO would be settled (refs B and C). Le Gal referred to the UN report issued on May 24. She said that she had not studied the report closely, but she understood that it contained language on the command and control issue that was acceptable to both the UN and AU, and that therefore the matter had perhaps been settled. She indicated that, unless further review raised or renewed French concerns, the French would likely support the conclusions in the report.

ABDULWAHID

¶14. (C) Per ref A, we asked Le Gal about Abdulwahid and his willingness to participate in political dialogue. She said that he remained very negative about the dialogue process. He was making maximalist demands that Le Gal said were very unrealistic. However, she noted that UN Envoy Jan Eliasson would meet with Abdulwahid in Paris on Sunday, May 27. Le Gal said that the GOF would not be involved in the meeting but had helped facilitate it.

COMMENT

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¶15. (C) It is evident that Kouchner's strong interest in Darfur has gotten many elements of the GOF into motion at an elevated pace. Le Gal described an ambitious series of options under consideration, but she was careful to note several times that any options package would have to survive close interministerial and presidential scrutiny before implementation. Nonetheless, French activism of this sort is welcome, even if the resulting package turns out to be more modest than what Le Gal described. Le Gal, suffering from a bad head cold, said that she and her staff were pushing themselves quite hard to meet Kouchner's demands, but she indicated that the effort was worth it. END COMMENT.

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